

# TO THE HONOURABLE

## THE KNIGHTS, CITIZENS AND BURGESSES OF THE COMMONS HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT:

The humble Petition of sundry Ministers intrusted to sollicite the Petition and Remonstrance formerly exhibited to this Honourable House, and of many of their Brethren, most humbly sheweth,

**T**hat the Petitioners doe most thankfully value and heartily acknowledge the indefatigable paines and Piety of this Honourable Assembly, manifested in very many things of high concernment for the glory of God, the honour of the King, the purging of the Church, and the safety and prosperity of this and the rest of his Majesties Kingdomes; but more especially, in procuring that publique *Fast* at your first Sitting, which hath prevented many mischiefs, and drawne downe many blessings upon the Kingdome ever since: In your zeale and courage for the true Religion professed among us against all Popish Idolatry and Superstitious Innovations expressed by your noble and Religious *Protestation* and *Vow*: In countenancing the Sacred Ordinance of Preaching after long and deepe contempt call upon it by too many who had almost exiled it from divers parts of this Kingdome: In encouraging painfull and godly Ministers formerly set aside, and now againe profitably employed in many Congregations greatly needing them: In discourteasing bold and unmeet men, that without sufficient Calling have presumptuously intruded into that holy Office, as also of all unworthy and scandalous Ministers that have bene convented before you: In accepting a former *Petition* and *Remonstrance* from the Petitioners, taking the same into your grave Consideration, and vigorously prosecuting some part thereof: In freeing divers godly Ministers out of Prison, and exile, and many others from heave Censures unjustly inflicted: In preventing the utter ruine of the Petitioners, and of many more, by breaking that wicked Yoke or the late pernicious *Oath* and *Canons* justly branded by both Houses of Parliament, and by taking away the late dreadfull tyranny of the *High Commission* Court, and other illegall and heave pressures of the rest of the Courts Ecclesiasticall: In your worthy Orders for removing of all illegall Rites and Ceremonies, superstitious and scandalous Images and Pictures, and other Innovations out of all Churches and Chappels: In your prudent, happy, and timely reuniting (without spilling of Christian blood) of the two Kingdomes of *England* and *Scotland* in a firme and religious Peace unhappily disturbed to the apparant endangering of both: In your honourable endeavours to relieve and rescue our distressed brethren in *Ireland* from the barbarous outrages and butcheries of the Popish Rebels there: In your constant vigilancie to discover and defeat the many desperate and divilish Conspiracies and Treasons against the King, Parliament, and the Kingdome, plotted by Papists and their malignant Adherents, implacable Enemies to our Religion and Peace. Together with all other your excellent labours for reforming and settling the Affaires of the Common-wealth, whereof the Petitioners doe also with others enjoy the comfort: and the large and blessed hopes given to the Petitioners of your further endeavours for perfecting the Reformation of Religion and the Church according to the necessity thereof, in a way best becomming the Honour of such a Grave and Religious Body. All of which doe much encourage them to powre out their soules in all possible thankfulness unto God for you, and to put up more fervent prayers, publickely, and privately, upon all occasions, on your behalfe, at the Throne of Grace.

But so it is, that whereas the Petitioners did, in their former Petition represent unto you divers unsufferable grievances arising from sundry Invasions made upon the publique *Doctrine* of this Church, from some mixtures and blemishes in the publique Worship of God by Law established, as well as from sundry grosse Innovations & Superstitions in Rites and Ceremonies without Law introduced, from many Exorbitances and unsupportable Usurpations in Ecclesiasticall Government, and from the scandalous defect of Ministers Maintenance in too many places: All, or most of which doe yet remaine in greatest part unremoved, by reason of your many necessitated diversions from this great Worke, for the preservation of the very Being of this Kingdome. And, by meanes hereof, many distractions and disorders about matters of Religion and the Church have, to the great scandall and grieve of the Petitioners, happened, and are still continued; which puts them upon a necessity of renewing their former suit for redresse of the aforesaid evils, and for removing what ever shall appeare to your Wisdome to be the roote and cause of them.

And whereas further the Petitioners and very many others (in whose name and behalfe they now humbly supplicate) desirous in all things to submit to the Lawes so far as possibly they may, yet, meerly out of tendernes and scruple of conscience, dare not continue (as formerly they did) the use and exercise of some things, as now they stand enjoyed, not onely because they have more seriously weighed the nature and scandall of them, and that sundry Bishops, and other grave Divines, called to their assistance, by Order of the House of Peeres, have (as they are informed) discovered divers particulars needing alteration in the *Liturgy*, and the use thereof; and that there is not, as they humbly conceive, at this day commonly extant any Booke of Common-Prayer, without so many variations, alterations, and additions, as render it in many parts another thing from that which was by Law established; but chiefly because you also have vouchsafed to be so far sensible of the defects thereof, and of the just scruples of the Petitioners thereabout, as to take the reformation thereof under consideration, which they hoped would be some shelter against the strict pressing the use of it, till your pleasure, upon the full debate thereof, had bene declared in a Parliamentary way; for that it seemes most equall that the Consciences of men should not be forced upon that which a Parliament it selfe holds needfull to consider the Reformation of, and to give Order in, till the same be accordingly done. And the Petitioners having been comfortably assured of some ease therein, doe now, to their great sorrow, apprehend that the same things are anew reinforced, which (contrary to the blessed inclination and intention of his most Gracious Majesty) may occasion much trouble and vexation to sundry worthy and peaceable Ministers: which the Petitioners have more cause to feare, because sundry of their Brethren, have, since the beginning of this Parliament, bene indicted upon the *Stat.* of 1. *Eliz.* 2. and others threatned for bare omissions of some things complained of to this high Court, and still depending before you; whiles, in divers places, your Religious Orders necessarily made and published for removing of things illegall, are not observed; and, in other places, where some superstitious rites and practises had by vertue thereof, bene laid aside, the same are againe called backe and repractised, without any check or animadversion.

And because the premisses are of extraordinary consequence, and cannot receive a perfect Cure but by authority of Parliament: and that a free *Synod* of this Nation, differing in the whole Constitution from the present *Convocations* of the Clergy now in use among us, might be (as the Petitioners apprehend) of great use for that purpose; and, that not onely this, but all other your great Consultations might be much furthered by a more earnest and assiduous seeking of God by the joynt and publique *Fasting* and *Prayers* of the whole Kingdome in these sad times so full of distractions and hellish Conspiracies at home, and bloody cruelties of those Popish Rebels against our own flesh and our bones in *Ireland*.

The Petitioners humbly pray that you would vouchsafe to lay hold upon the first opportunity, that your important affaires will permit, of reassuming into your further consideration their former *Petition*, and to proceed thereupon as you shall finde cause, either by committing the same to the debate and disquisition of a free *Synod*, or otherwise; And in the meane time to become Mediators to his gracious Majesty (who could not take notice of their former Petition to this honourable House) for some relaxation in matters of Ceremonies, and of reading of the whole *Liturgy*, which, as the Petitioners verily beleve and hope to prove, have bene of late times urged further than ever the Law intended: and that a free *Synod* of Grave, Learned, and Judicious Divines of this Kingdome, the *Dominion of Wales*, and the *Islands* adjacent, may be by authority of Parliament indicted, for the more thorough and fruitfull debate of the premisses, to expedite a full Reformation by the high Court of Parliament, for the settling of a godly and religious Order and Government in this Church, as your Wisdome shall finde convenient: And that a publique *Fast* may be commanded and religiously observed throughout the Kingdome, once in every moneth, during your sitting in Parliament, for the more effectually procuring of Gods protection of your persons, and of his blessing upon your proceedings; and till the miseries of our brethren in *Ireland* bee happily put to an end.

And the Petitioners shall be ready further to attend the pleasure of this House with their reasons of their present suite for a free *Synod* of this Nation, and of a new Constitution thereof differing from those now in being, when they shall be required; and, to pray without ceasing, &c.

This Petition was presented by the Ministers themselves, and afterwards read, and well accepted in the House, Decemb. 20. 1641.

L O N D O N,

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